



La Jolla Historical Society

Volume 25, No. 3

Summer 2006

Surfing La Jolla

From Black's Beach to Bird Rock

An Exhibition

Gidget! Cliff Robertson! The Pump House Gang!
Windansea Surf Rats!



Circle Sunday, July 23, on your calendar for the La Jolla Historical Society's first surfing exhibit. Sharilyn Gallison, Ruth Covell, Sandy Brabon, Bill Andrews, George Taylor, John Slavin, Marshall Myrman and Debbie Beacham have been busy putting together a photo exhibit of La Jolla's famous surf spots and surfers as well as a display of surfing memorabilia. The Society's extensive photo collection will be called upon but members of the committee are contributing their collections for viewing. (See story on "Surf's Up" by Sandy Spalding in this newsletter issue.)

There will not be a program, per se, but the above La Jolla surfers have put together an exhibit you, your parents and your kids will really enjoy. It will be held on the grassy lawn at Wisteria Cottage, 780 Prospect St., from 1 p.m. until 3 p.m. We'll also have on display boards showing our plans for expanding into this historically designated building. Refreshments will be served. Get your wet suit ready and plan on coming on down.

Cowabunga!!

Surf's Up at the Shack

By Sandy Spalding

Surfing has become so ingrained as part of Southern California culture that it's easy to forget it originated in Hawaii.

It arrived in America in 1907 when an Irish-Hawaiian, George Freeth, was brought to the mainland by the Redondo-Los Angeles Railroad Company as a promotional stunt. Written at about the same time and nationally published, an article

entitled "The Royal Sport" by Jack London further popularized the sport. In 1912, the famous Hawaiian surfer/swimmer Duke Kahanamoku stopped in Southern California on his way to the Olympic games and dazzled crowds with his feats on a board.

While it is not known exactly when surfing arrived in La Jolla, there is a local surfing icon at Windansea Beach

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2006 Secret Garden Tour a Sellout

By Diane Dawson

Warm weather and sunny skies greeted the Secret Garden Tour participants Saturday, May 21, 2006. The Eighth Annual Tour was a sold-out success and showcased gardens in the Muirlands, Bird Rock, Upper and Lower Hermosa as well as the Hillside area.

The individual homeowners showed off their passion for ponds filled with Koi fish, box turtles and tortoises, small rose gardens, vine-covered arbors and garden accents ranging from ornamental garden gates, water fountains, and mosaic benches to hydrangeas, orchids, impatiens, foxgloves and more.

Enhancing each garden were performing musicians, local artists at their easels and magnificent patio table settings artistically designed by local merchant designers to complement the landscaping of each garden. This year we provided an eighth garden for our Plati-
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surfing's Hawaiian roots.

Known simply as the "shack," the thatch-roofed structure was originally constructed in 1946. By

for the posts and to form a hipped roof over the approximately 22' by 18' base. Overlapping palm fronds make up the thatched roof.

and having his head shaved. Another source reported new members being upended and "basted with suntan lotion and beer." Such ceremonies have

freak wave on December 1, 1997, destroyed the aging structure, local surfer and former president of the Windansea Surf Club Hans Newman, who has since moved from La Jolla, headed a crew that used Okey's original plans to restore the shack.

To further preserve and protect the structure, Newman filed documentation to give the shack a historic designation. This brought nationwide publicity to La Jolla's surfing shrine in *Preservation*, the magazine of the National Trust, in their March/April 1998 edition and earned Newman, Melinda Merwyweather and Kevin Weber recognition from the Save Our Heritage Organization.

As part of the designation, the whole area of Windansea Beach is to be preserved as a natural beach without the addition of stairs, sidewalks or other improvements. ❖



The gang working on the shack at Windansea, ca. 1975

that time many service men returning from WWII had been exposed to the sport in the Pacific, and similar shacks had been built by surfers at other California beaches, most notably at San Onofre.

Although sources vary as to the fate of the original structure (one reports it burned by "a disgruntled high school football player who lost his girlfriend to a local surfer" and another blames it on a storm), Don Okey is credited with engineering the current replacement.

Deliberately built with open sides to prevent its use for unapproved activities, the anchoring posts have

For surfers, the shack provided refuge from the sun and served as a resting place for their boards. While today's surfers enjoy such luxuries as wetsuits and lightweight boards, the early "Plank Boys" braved the cold and toted boards weighing fifty to one hundred pounds or more to enjoy their sport. Because of their wood construction as either hollow or planks easily damaged by too much sun, the early boards also benefited from the shade provided by the structure.

Initiation into the Windansea surfing culture often included rites conducted at the shack. In a November 3,

since been discontinued.

In addition to its surfing use, the shack was a social gathering place for the many legendary Windansea surfers. Stories abound about the parties and luaus held there. While the early events were pretty tame affairs with bonfires and ukulele playing, as surfing became more territorial in the late 1950-60s, Windansea's reputation as an exclusive area unwelcoming to outsiders gave it an unsavory aura. Tom Wolfe's essay, "The Pump House Gang," added to this dubious reputation.

With the changing times, the activities at Windansea have returned to a more

New Members

Clifford Evans
Genia Finch
Helen Fox
Stephanie Anne Freeman
Cathy Glick
Jan Spencer Gobel
Marcy Goldstone
Frieda Levinsky
The Style Exchange

Contributions

Torrey Pines
Christian Church

R. Joseph Monsen,
for Garden Maintenance